60p

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

82

Spirit portraits
Monsters that got away
Zombies: the walking dead
Window area mysteries
Mystery submersibles

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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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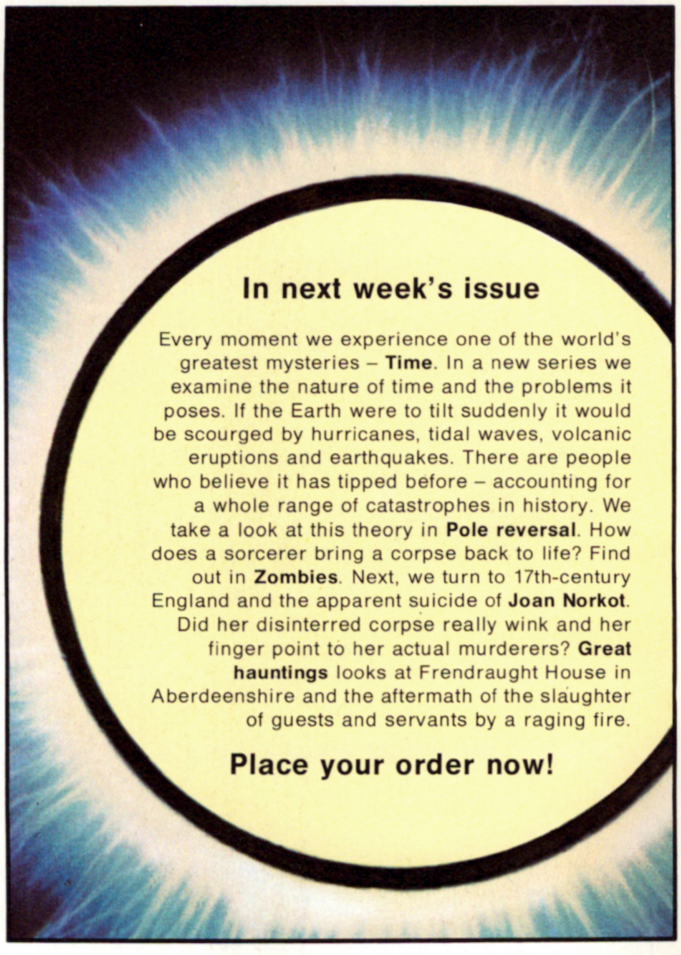

In next week's issue

Every moment we experience one of the world's greatest mysteries – **Time**. In a new series we examine the nature of time and the problems it poses. If the Earth were to tilt suddenly it would be scourged by hurricanes, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. There are people who believe it has tipped before – accounting for a whole range of catastrophes in history. We take a look at this theory in **Pole reversal**. How does a sorcerer bring a corpse back to life? Find out in **Zombies**. Next, we turn to 17th-century England and the apparent suicide of **Joan Norkot**. Did her disinterred corpse really wink and her finger point to her actual murderers? **Great hauntings** looks at Frendraught House in Aberdeenshire and the aftermath of the slaughter of guests and servants by a raging fire.

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In the summer of 1980 the crew of the *Caioba-Seahorse* tugboat saw a mysterious object floating on the water off the coast of Brazil. It seemed to be signalling by turning on various coloured lights – and soon after a UFO descended. Slowly the two objects linked up and then, as one, rose and swept out to sea. Did the crew witness a rescue operation of a USO by a UFO?

An unfathomable mystery

Everyone has heard of unidentified flying objects, but what about unidentified submarine objects? A growing number of reports about USOs has led JANET and COLIN BORD to investigate this phenomenon

ON THE EVENING of 30 July 1967 Jorge Montoya was officer on duty on the Argentinian ship *Naviero* as it steamed in the South Atlantic 120 miles (190 kilometres) from the Brazilian coast. The off-duty officers and crew were below having their evening meal and all was calm and as it should be. Glancing over to the starboard side, Montoya was suddenly startled to see a strange cigar-shaped craft gliding silently through the water 50 feet (15 metres) away. He stared in amazement for a moment and then alerted the captain on the intercom. When Captain Julián Ardanza arrived on deck the mysterious vessel was still running alongside his ship. The two men studied it for some 15 minutes as it held its position. The mystery vessel glowed with a brilliant bluish-white light and left no wake. They estimated its length as about 105 to 110 feet (32 to 33.5 metres).

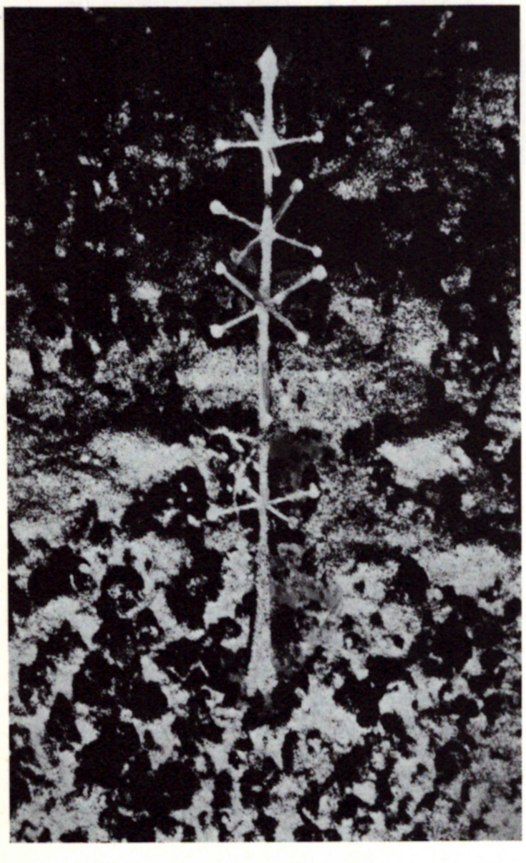
Then, without any warning, the unidentified vessel turned towards the merchant ship and, glowing brilliantly as it accelerated, it dived beneath the ship and rapidly disappeared into the ocean depths. The officers and crew of the *Naviero* had just witnessed one of the enigmatic unidentified submarine objects (USOs). In a subsequent press interview the captain said that it was certainly no

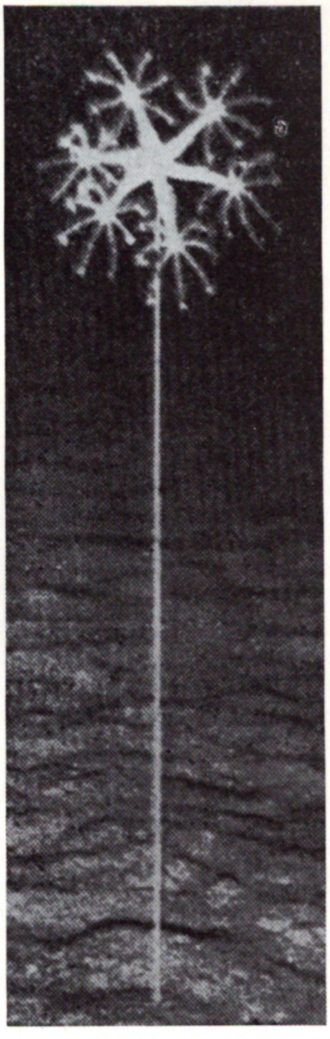
conventional submarine nor a whale, and during 20 years at sea he had never seen anything like it.

The number of UFO sightings recorded since the late 1940s runs into tens of thousands, and the reports that have been collected suggest that USOs are almost as numerous in the waters of this planet as are UFOs in the skies. More than 70 per cent of the Earth's surface is covered with water. The average depth of the seas and oceans is 2 miles (3 kilometres), and Man has barely begun to explore the vast area that lies beneath the surface. Here technologically advanced beings would find an ideal place in which to pursue their activities well away from the sight of men.

Just as diligent researchers have unearthed reports of UFOs that pre-date the 1947 sightings – believed by many to be the first – so there are also reports of USOs from the past century. On the night of 24 February 1885 in the North Pacific the crew of the ship *Innerwich* watched as a huge object, glowing with a brilliant red light, dived into the sea, throwing up a large volume of water as it sank below the waves. On 12 November 1887 near Cape Race, Newfoundland, Captain Moore of the British ship *Siberian* watched for five minutes as 'a large ball of fire' rose from the ocean to a height of 50 feet (15 metres). It moved towards his ship and against the prevailing wind before it departed. These and many other reports suggest that USOs can sometimes become UFOs, and vice versa.

One of the most dramatic cases in the USO files occurred on the night of 26 July 1980.





The object on the left was photographed in the ocean west of the Cape of Good Hope in 1964 and has puzzled marine biologists ever since. It looks as if it was built, and the cross-arms are suggestive of some kind of antenna. But is it anything other than a marine animal? Could it in fact be one of the tall polyps (above) that live in the same waters?

The tugboat *Caioba-Seahorse* was on a routine journey when, 60 miles (95 kilometres) from the Brazilian coast near Natal, the first mate was suddenly aware of a grey object 30 feet (10 metres) in diameter floating on the surface straight ahead. At the same time a bright light could be seen over the sea rapidly approaching them. The first mate quickly changed direction to avoid a collision with the floating object, which then turned on various coloured lights – yellow, red, green and blue. The bright light had now reached them and could be seen as a glowing oval body hovering silently about 200 feet (60 metres) above the floating USO. The tugboat's engines had stopped and the crew watched with fear and fascination as the UFO slowly descended onto the floating USO. A link-up took place, the USO lights went out, and the two bodies rose together. After hovering for some minutes in the area the UFO with its load swept rapidly out to sea. This event naturally prompted a high-level investigation by the naval authorities, and much speculation from the Brazilian civilian ufologists. Did the tugboat crew witness a rescue operation of one UFO by another? Or was it more of a routine pick-up, at a pre-arranged location? No conclusion could be reached, but whatever the naval authorities found out they kept to themselves.

A green glow at sea

USOs have also been sighted off the North American coast, one witness being 19-year-old Wesley Gruman who was driving to Oak Bluff, Massachusetts, on the evening of 27 March 1979. Noticing a green glow over the top of some sand dunes, he looked towards the sea as soon as his view of it was unobstructed. Some 200 feet (60 metres) offshore a 30-foot (9-metre) long luminous cylinder was floating on the water. Gruman stopped his car as the USO silently rose from the surface and he got out to watch its ascent. He decided to get his powerful hand lamp from the car, but found he could move only his head. This paralysis lasted until the USO had flown out of sight, and Gruman also reported two other odd effects. The first was a low frequency hum that his AM car radio had emitted during the sighting, and the second was the behaviour of his wristwatch. This hand-wound calendar model had been three days ahead with its date before his experience, but the next day it was showing the correct date and has done since then.

At Newport, Rhode Island, John Gallagher observed during daylight hours something unidentified that was lifted or propelled from the sea. In April 1961 he was working on a house by the beach and noticed a red sphere bobbing on the waves. Intrigued, he went to the second floor for a better view, and he could then see that it was about 200 yards (180 metres) offshore and drifting seawards. Suddenly, it rose steadily to a height of about 60 feet (18 metres),

stopped, and then, accelerating to about 100 miles per hour (160 km/h), moved with an undeviating flight out to sea. Gallagher was sure he had not seen a balloon, for its movements and speed had not been those of an object being blown by the wind, but of one under intelligent control.

Unidentified submarine objects also extend their activities to inland waters. There are reports of them seen entering and leaving lakes and rivers, harbours, creeks and fjords. There was a mass sighting on the Araguari River in Brazil in November 1980 when more than 70 people who were waiting for a ferry saw a solid object 15 feet (5 metres) in diameter rise from under the water. For some four minutes it hovered at a height of 650 feet (200 metres), and then slowly moved out to sea. At one point it moved to within 100 feet (30 metres) of the bank.

The man who saw 'a typical flying saucer' rise from the Thompson River near Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada, wished to remain anonymous, but he is known as a reliable individual to Dr J. Allen Hynek, world renowned UFO authority. On the sunny afternoon of 16 May 1981, the witness was quietly fishing when, with a noise 'like water being poured into a hot frying pan', the strange craft emerged from the frothing water about 100 yards (90 metres) offshore. Then, with a rapid acceleration, it zoomed up over his head and quickly flew away. As it did so there was a pattering sound as pellets of something from the object rained down around him. He collected some of this material, which was taken for analysis by the Center for UFO Studies in Illinois, USA. At the end of 1981 the results were still to be announced.

The driver and passengers of a London bus had a front-seat view when a silver cigar-shaped USO dived into the River Lea after cutting through telephone wires and gouging a scar in the concrete bank. Bob Fall was driving his number 123 bus towards Tottenham on 13 April 1964 when the USO dived across the road in front of him and landed in the river. The police, who found nothing when they dragged the 6-foot (2-metre) deep river, suggested that the witnesses may have seen a flight of ducks – but that still does not explain broken wires and damaged concrete.

Another 'impossible' USO was observed in the St Lawrence River near the city of Quebec, Canada, in March 1965. For four or five minutes Captain Claude Laurin of Quebecair and his co-pilot could see the 'submarine' lying below the surface over 200 miles (320 kilometres) from the open sea, a situation that would be extremely hazardous for any ordinary submersible. On 23 May 1969 three eyewitnesses watched 'a round shining object with flashing red lights' dive into the St Lawrence. A police search 'found nothing'.

The possibility that some UFOs, after a supersonic flight through the atmosphere, need to cool their overheated structures is persuasively supported by the following report. In the summer of 1967 a cub master and his assistant were camping with their cub pack on the shore of a quiet lake 20 miles (32 kilometres) from St John, New Brunswick,

Titicus reservoir in New York state, USA. This body of water was the scene of a USO sighting by a couple called Bordes in 1955. They were followed by the lights of a floating object for a time, but came to no harm. Reports indicate that reservoirs seem to be of special interest to USOs

Canada. The boys were asleep and the two men had walked down to the lake to fetch water. Down through the dusk came a UFO shaped like two saucers – or plates placed face to face – with lights flashing red, orange, green and blue around its edge. As it touched the water and sank there was a sizzling noise, reminiscent of the sound reported by the man who saw a UFO rise from the Kamloops River in 1981. The lake contained clear, cold water and was fed by mountain snows, but when the men looked at it the next morning it was quite muddy and felt lukewarm.

Not many people spend their nights outdoors on lakes, but those who do may see strange sights, as did Mr and Mrs Bordes who, on the night of 16 September 1955, were fishing on the Titicus reservoir in New York state. By 1.30 a.m. they had had no luck. Then Mrs Bordes saw a pink luminous sphere rise from the water and splash back in again. A short while later, back on shore, they both saw a dark shape out on the water. It had two white horizontal streaks of light at its base and a pale yellow revolving light above. Mr Bordes, more curious than afraid, rowed towards the lights, and they retreated at a faster rate. Then they came towards him and he in turn rowed away. His wife did not like the situation at all, so they rowed a mile (1.6 kilometres) to the mooring stage, the lights following at a distance. As they drove off in their car the lights were still visible on the reservoir. Reservoirs seem to be of particular interest to UFOs and USOs, and there are many reports of their activity over and in such waters. Speculation among researchers runs the gamut from the suggestion that they are monitoring the pollution to which humanity subjects itself, to the belief that they are

Lake Siljan in Sweden in the green lush of summer (above) and as it looked in the icy winter of 1976 when a USO ploughed across it (below). Three witnesses saw a big grey object cut a channel through the thick ice of the lake – an incident that has remained a mystery to this day. The way the ice was broken suggests that something extremely powerful may have pushed up from below rather than fallen from the sky

Opposite: newspaper stories speculate about the mystery objects falling into Swedish lakes and about the 'ghost rockets' seen in Swedish skies. One theory was that the UFOs were V2 rockets (far right) being tested by the Russians. But the known facts about V2s do not bear this out

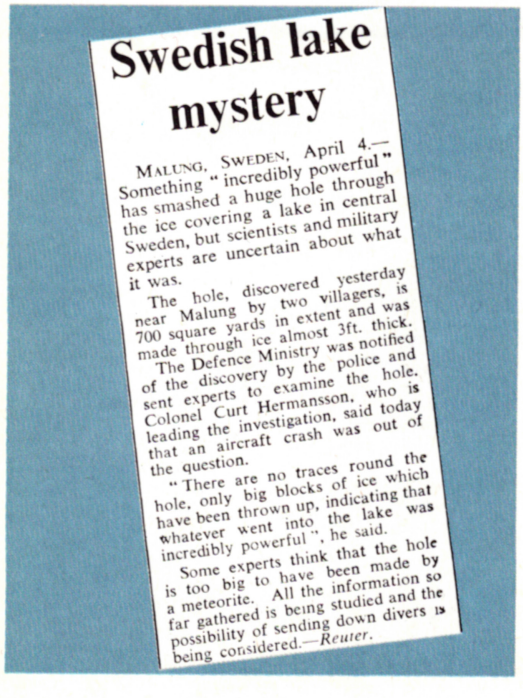
systematically doping our drinking water for reasons best known to themselves.

The power of these enigmatic machines, if machines they are, seems to be immense, as the following reports from the ice-clad waters of Sweden indicate. On 30 April 1976 between 5.15 and 5.30 p.m. three witnesses watched as a 30-foot (9-metre) long, dark grey object ploughed across Lake Siljan in central Sweden, cutting a channel through the 8-inch (20-centimetre) thick ice. The channel was 10 to 12 feet (3 to 3.6 metres) wide and ran across the lake for more than half a mile (800 metres). As the USO ripped through the ice at about 60 miles per hour (95 km/h), ice blocks and water cascaded up on either side. Eight years earlier, on 5 April 1968, *The Times* reported that 'something "incredibly powerful" has smashed a huge hole through the ice covering a lake in Central Sweden, but scientists and military experts are uncertain about what it was.' Two local people had found the hole, which was 700 square yards (585 square metres) in area, near Malung. Leading the investigation was Colonel Curt Hermansson, who said that an aircraft crash was out of the question as there were no traces around the hole, 'only big blocks of ice which have been thrown up, indicating that whatever went into the lake was incredibly powerful'. The fact that the 3-foot (1-metre) thick ice had been thrown *up* suggests that, in view of the USO activity that has been logged, something 'incredibly powerful' may have come *up* from below – but who can be certain? Divers who went down could find nothing on the muddy lake bottom to explain the mystery. A few days later another large hole was discovered in the ice covering a lake at Serna, and that too remained a mystery.

It is not surprising that the authorities assumed that the holes had been made by objects falling into the water. For years the Scandinavians have been plagued by unidentified objects falling from the skies into their lakes. A great many of these occurred in 1946 and were at first dubbed meteors by the press, but when reports of silver torpedo-shaped projectiles emitting trails of smoke continued to be made, very often several reports each day, they were termed 'ghost rockets'. The first assumption was that these were captured German V2 rockets being tested by the Russians, but these speculations were not borne out by the facts. Although the German Peenemünde rocket development complex had been occupied by the Russians in May 1945, the German scientists had already surrendered to the American forces, leaving the testing facilities completely wrecked. It would not have been possible for Russian scientists to start assembling and firing V1s or V2s in the time available, let alone develop and build hundreds of new rockets with flight characteristics quite different from those of the V2.

A typical 'ghost rocket' report was made on 19 July 1946 by a family group who reported that, with a noise 'like a mighty wind', two rockets, 7 feet (2 metres) long and with stubby 3-foot (1-metre) wings halfway down their bodies, swept overhead and dived into Lake Mjøsa 60 miles (96 kilometres) north of Oslo in Norway. A crater could be seen at the bottom of the lake, but dredging by the military authorities found nothing. The ghost rockets were tracked on radar as they made abrupt changes of direction, but they were rarely seen to crash. But when they did they always crashed into a lake – yet no traces of wreckage were ever found, despite intensive searches by troops.

Reports of weird crews and strange artefacts on the sea bed – see page 1686



Swedish lake mystery

MALUNG, SWEDEN, April 4.—Something "incredibly powerful" has smashed a huge hole through the ice covering a lake in central Sweden, but scientists and military experts are uncertain about what it was.

The hole, discovered yesterday near Malung by two villagers, is 700 square yards in extent and was made through ice almost 3ft. thick.

The Defence Ministry was notified of the discovery by the police and sent experts to examine the hole. Colonel Curt Hermansson, who is leading the investigation, said today that an aircraft crash was out of the question.

"There are no traces round the hole, only big blocks of ice which have been thrown up, indicating that whatever went into the lake was incredibly powerful", he said.

Some experts think that the hole is too big to have been made by a meteorite. All the information so far gathered is being studied and the possibility of sending down divers is being considered.—*Reuter.*

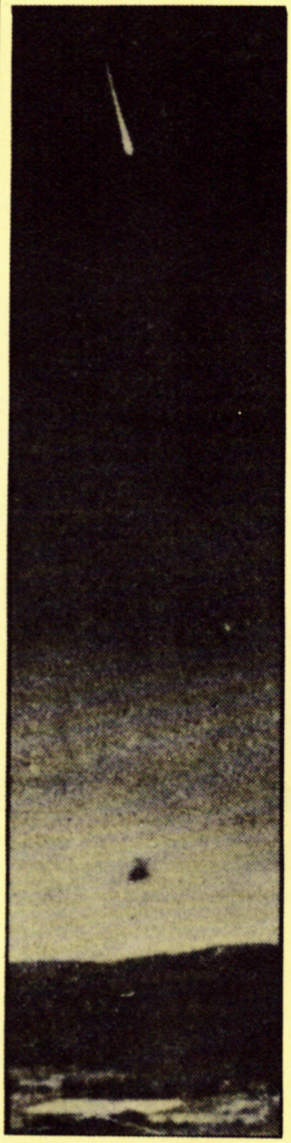
MYSTERY ROCKETS OVER SWEDEN "FOR PRACTICE"

SWEDISH military officials, who have been investigating about 300 reports of "fireballs" which they received from various parts of Sweden between 9 July and 12 July, are no longer in doubt that the country is being used for regular practice with steered rockets.

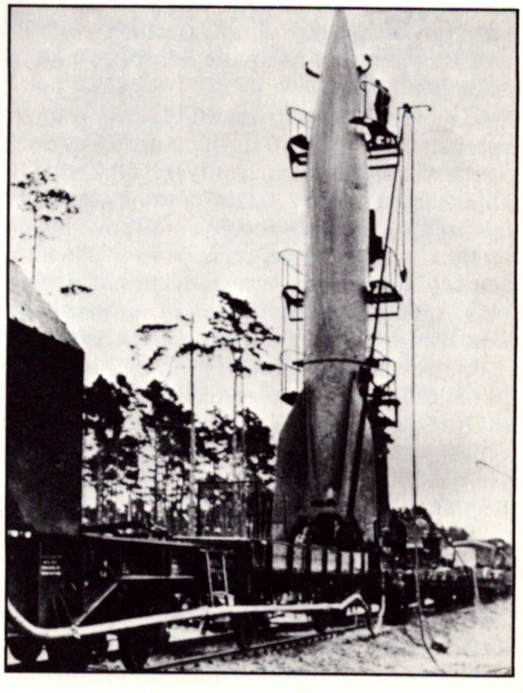
The authorities have promised a communique when their researches are complete.

Some reports indicate that the projectiles are furnished with a self-destruction device, since explosions have apparently occurred in the air.

The longest line of flight over Swedish territory mapped by military experts covered about 625 miles. The first German V-2's made flights of only 175 to 235 miles.—A.P.



This photograph, just received from Stockholm, shows one of the many rockets which have been seen flying over Sweden.



Through the glass—darkly

A spate of reports of strange phenomena centred on one location can quickly lead to the conclusion that a window area has been discovered. JENNY RANDLES describes some places notorious for paranormal happenings and shows how the legends develop

PERHAPS THE WORLD'S most famous window area is the Bermuda Triangle. Through the promotion of numerous writers, most notably Charles Berlitz, it has become widely known – and, if fame alone were a guide to the truth, this part of the Atlantic Ocean would be of enormous importance. Unfortunately it is not (see page 1261).

There are a growing number of serious students of the paranormal who suspect that the Bermuda Triangle is a gigantic myth, the product of distortion, exaggeration and a plain disregard for the facts. Books by Larry Kusche and Paul Begg, a contributor to *The Unexplained*, have cast considerable doubt on many of the classic cases on which the Triangle legend rests. So, one feels entitled to ask, is there any substance at all to the mystery?

As with all window area cases, this question is difficult to answer. Separating truth from rumour is a tricky, sometimes impossible business. But there are some stories that do at least intrigue, and may suggest that there is more to the notion than some people are prepared to admit. Here is one example, an account that was submitted in early 1981 to a British UFO research society, the UFO Investigators' Network (UFOIN), as a UFO report – although, as will become evident, this is a less than adequate description of its contents.

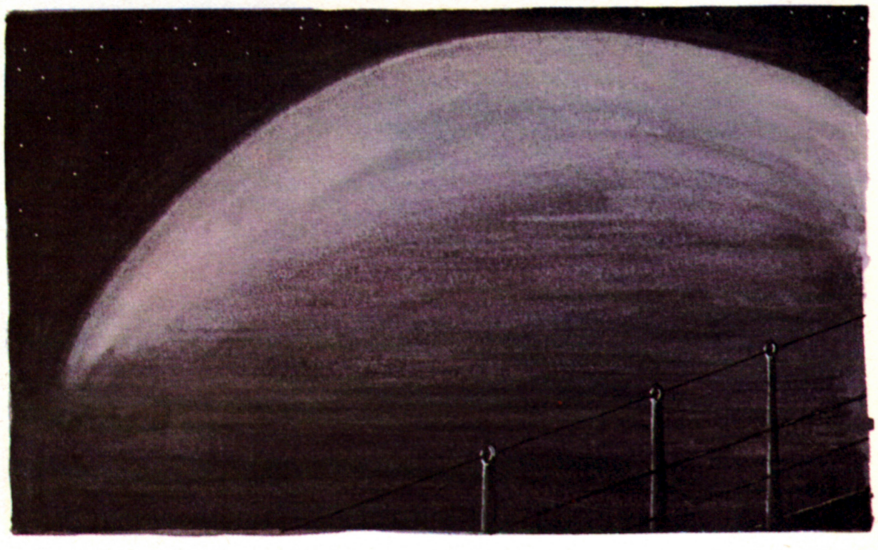
The story came from an elderly seaman, recently retired, who in the autumn of 1928 was a crewman aboard a large tanker. The ship was sailing the Atlantic, somewhere just east of Florida, in the course of a long voyage. At the time, of course, there was no talk of the Bermuda Triangle – the concept had not yet been invented. But it seems, nevertheless, that this is where the ship was situated.

One evening at about 8 p.m. the sailor was in his cabin, about to go to the ship's library as was his custom. Things seemed oddly quiet, so he went out on deck to investigate. He was disturbed by what he found: the ship was almost totally deserted! He walked the decks of the long, narrow tanker, surveying all the places where people should be. He found nothing. The entire crew seemed to have disappeared off the face of the Earth.

Not surprisingly, the man was a little distressed. His disquiet was not eased as he looked out over the rails towards the sea. For here, too, things were far from normal. The sea and sky seemed to blend into one at the horizon, forming a continuous flat, grey surface. The smooth monotony went on and on, giving no indication of motion or time. Above the horizon, or where the horizon should have been, there was a kind of leaden grey dome that towered in an arc across the bows of the ship. Whether part of the sky, or some hovering form, the man could not tell, but in later years pictures of domed UFOs reminded him of it. Except that if this *was* a UFO, it was gigantic – it occupied around 120° of arc!

In desperation, the sailor sat down on the deck, on a narrow walkway. Anyone passing along the ship had to come this way. After a few timeless minutes, without a clue where he was or what to do, the man was relieved to see one of his shipmates rush towards him, yelling 'Where have you been?' He told how the crew had begun looking for him when he had not turned up for his habitual visit to the library, and had apparently completely disappeared. They had scoured the ship for him, but found no trace. The sailor looked up to find the sea and sky normal once more, and the oppressive feeling of 'time suspension' no longer with him. He did not know what to say. For there was no way that even two people searching for one another on the ship could have avoided a meeting for 10 minutes or more. The walkway was not wide enough for two people to pass each other.

Of course, we can do no more than treat this as an interesting mystery story. What status it has as a factual account must remain open to doubt. But it does have close connections with other examples of time anomaly – it is as if, for a few minutes, two worlds diverged, as in the parallel universe theory of



Below: a seaman's terrifying experience aboard a tanker in the west Atlantic Ocean in 1928: for several minutes, the entire crew disappeared and what seemed to be a huge UFO filled the sky. The tanker was, it seems, then in the famous Bermuda Triangle region, once notorious, but now thoroughly discredited, as a dangerous window area

Above right: Cradle Hill, Warminster, in southern England, scene of many of the UFO encounters and other weird events that have taken place in and around Warminster since Christmas Day 1964. Local journalist Arthur Shuttlewood (right) has done much to stimulate interest in the strange phenomena; the idea that they have some message for humankind has taken root in the minds of local inhabitants, as is shown by this graffito (far right) from Cradle Hill

time (see page 1512), and the sailor jumped out of the time/space lane in which he was previously and subsequently travelling.

Perhaps this is indeed what happened, or perhaps there is a different explanation. Stories such as this are the skeletons upon which the Bermuda Triangle myth has been built and fattened up until unrecognisable, by writers who have one eye on the extraordinary human interest they possess, and another on the possible financial gain.

One of the greatest dangers in trying to locate window areas lies in relating things that really do not have any relationship at all.

Once a location is credited with mysterious powers, anything and everything can be made to fit in with this hypothesis. The process is illustrated by a purported UFO landing in Urmston, Greater Manchester, England. The object turned out to be nothing more than the planet Venus, blazing more brightly than usual in the early dawn sky – but to the media this explanation was of no interest. What did interest them was the version reported by the witnesses, where Venus became a mysterious flying saucer. Basing their theories on this biased interpretation, a whole host of people started to associate new phenomena with the 'UFO' and its 'landing site'. Indeed, by now even the light that was originally reported had grown in popular conception to a structured metal disc! Some horses in a field, moving about restlessly – in reality probably bothered by the freezing weather – came to be 'reacting to a force field generated by the object'. And one theorist even concluded that a mysterious epidemic of vanishing cats, lost over preceding months from a local estate, had in fact been abducted by the aliens!

'The Warminster Thing'

The most famous window area in Britain is undoubtedly Warminster, a quiet country town on the edge of Salisbury Plain. In late 1964 its peace was shattered by the arrival of what came to be known as 'the Warminster Thing'. The 'Thing' came in several guises – UFOs, balls of light, strange noises, weird animals and so on. Very soon the entire town was on the lookout for the 'Thing', which was for a time as famous as the Loch Ness monster. Warminster was suddenly *the* place to be if you wanted to see something unusual; indeed, people still flock there from all over the world to sit and talk to other 'believers' in the 'Thing', or to try to catch a fleeting glimpse of the wondrous visitor. Even the local graffiti tend to follow the trend: one wall bears a plea to the aliens, a sign of the frustration the passing years have brought – 'Go back to Venus. . . . We don't want your lies no more!'

What was it that made Warminster so special? Its fame began with a rumour that may well have been based on some real experiences. But the place became such an overnight sensation, and fiction became subtly mixed with fact to such an extent that it is impossible to gauge whether there really is something remarkable about the place. There are inevitable suspicions that much of what followed was the product of some kind of human need to believe in the supernatural, and therefore to see it. After having made a long pilgrimage to stand on one of Warminster's chilly hillsides, it would not be very difficult for someone to persuade himself that the lights of a distant helicopter just might be something a little more peculiar. And there are many army bases in the area that conduct all kinds of military manoeuvres

on the plain – tanks, aircraft and helicopters, often in unusual configurations, various kinds of flares and searchlights, are all familiar sights to Warminster residents. But to an outside observer who has come to see the 'Thing', they can prove very deceptive.

Over the years, the man who has been mainly responsible for keeping the Warminster mystery afloat has been a local journalist, Arthur Shuttlewood. It was he who first brought the enigma to the notice of the world in his best-selling book *The Warminster mystery*, and many others. He writes with a lively style that endears him to his readers; from all over the world he collects stories of what people have seen in and around Warminster, and he has a few strange tales of his own to tell. All this has ensured continued interest in the mystery, leading more and more people to come and see for themselves.

Some people allege that the military in the area take a special interest in the mystery. There are even claims that they harbour a stack of secret photographs. In the summer of 1981 a couple visiting Warminster for the first time waited on a hillside as dusk set in, and were astonished when a military helicopter came out of the gloom and hovered close above them, the co-pilot leaning right out of the cockpit and staring down at them – all this despite the fact that they were on private, not army, land. However, none of this proves anything. Military men are human, and like anyone else they could merely have a personal interest in the mystery, and not be acting under orders to investigate it.

The Warminster case does not stand alone. The same pattern has been repeated, usually on a somewhat smaller scale, in many other locations throughout the world. One of the common denominators seems to be the presence of a focal figure who collects the reports, such as Arthur Shuttlewood at Warminster or John Keel at Michigan (see page 1605). Around them the mystery spins itself. Whether there is anything there to start with, or whether the mystery actually results from their interest in it, is a question that is often impossible to answer. Hilary Evans has analysed in detail how the mystery of the 'Welsh Triangle' of Dyfed, west Wales, was born (see page 810). Here authors of popular books picked up a tiny thread and wove a complex tapestry of distortion, lies and half-truths – plus a few genuine puzzles.

Troops stage a mock 'section attack' (above), and helicopters manoeuvre (below) on training exercises. It is easy to see how perfectly routine exercises staged by the many army bases on Salisbury Plain, close to Warminster, could be misinterpreted by the unwary as apparitions of the Warminster 'Thing'

Two photographs of the Warminster 'Thing'. On 29 August 1965 it appeared as a classic UFO (above) and was photographed by 19-year-old factory worker Gordon Faulkner; on 2 January 1966 it shot across the sky as a glowing ball of light (above left), photographed by 15-year-old Bob Langley

Below: Gaynor and Darren Sunderland at the site near Flint, Clwyd, where they allegedly first saw alien beings and UFOs in 1976. Their report triggered a spate of sightings – and led to the suspicion that Flint was a window area

One might be tempted to conclude that window areas simply do not exist. Nevertheless, there is an amount of unimpeachable evidence that suggests that certain areas just might attract strange events. Perhaps one of the best cases is the mystery of the Clwyd area of north Wales.

Deluge of weird events

In the summer of 1976, three children of the Sunderland family independently claimed to have seen strange alien creatures and UFOs in fields near Oakenholt, a small village close to Flint, Clwyd. This report led to a deluge of weird events, enveloping the family in a sequence of weird happenings.

These events did not receive any wide attention in the press – but, while investigators were researching them, other people in the immediate vicinity came forward with stories that were strangely similar to those of the Sunderland family. One teenage girl was so terrified by her experiences that she refused to talk to anyone for days. The revelations prompted a search through the records of the local newspaper to see if any anomalous events had been reported in the past. Indeed they had! Over the previous 10 years there had been a number of stories of yellow balls of light similar to those seen by the Sunderland family, and anomalous figures of strange shapes. No one had attached much importance to these curiosities at the time, but now they lent considerable strength to the idea that the locality is, indeed, a window area. But what *is* a window area?

The area itself offered very few clues. It was true that it had ancient connections – there were plenty of old monuments and dykes, and the important Roman border city of Chester is nearby. There is also a major electricity grid supply station in the vicinity, a factor that has in some suspected window areas proved to be the cause of the appearance of strange phenomena. The area straddles the Dee estuary, a fact that may also be significant – the nearby presence of water is another factor that researchers have sometimes suggested might prove important.

Somewhere in the data may lie the reason for the phenomena. No one has yet found out for sure what window areas are, although there is certainly no shortage of ideas. These range from the mundane to the ridiculous, and include such possibilities as mini black holes, time warps and doors into another dimension. But gradually research has found itself settling onto one or two possibilities, and positive progress is at last being made.

Does the answer to the window area riddle lie in geomagnetism? See page 1674

More dead than alive

The dead can be restored to a semblance of life – as zombies, the mindless slaves of evil magicians. So the superstitious people of Haiti, steeped in voodoo tradition, believe. FRANK SMYTH examines the tales that are told of the zombies' dreadful fate

'NEAR HER, THE BLACK FINGERS of one silent guest were clutched rigidly around the fragile stem of a wine glass, tilted, spilling. The horror pent up in her overflowed. She seized a candle, thrust it close to the slumped, bowed face, and saw the man was dead. She was sitting at a banquet table with four propped-up corpses. . . .'

So concluded the account of a voodoo wedding breakfast held in the 1920s and recounted to the American journalist William Seabrook by his Haitian friends. The corpses were intended to be turned by sorcery into zombies – half-animate bodies living a twilight existence as the slaves of the magician who was the banquet's host. (In fact, according to Seabrook, his intention was thwarted, he fled and the corpses disappeared.)

There is only one country in the Western world where such a ghastly celebration might have taken place: Haiti, birthplace of voodoo.

Do voodoo sorcerers really have the power to reanimate newly dead corpses? Or is the notion of the zombie pure self-deception on the part of voodoo practitioners?

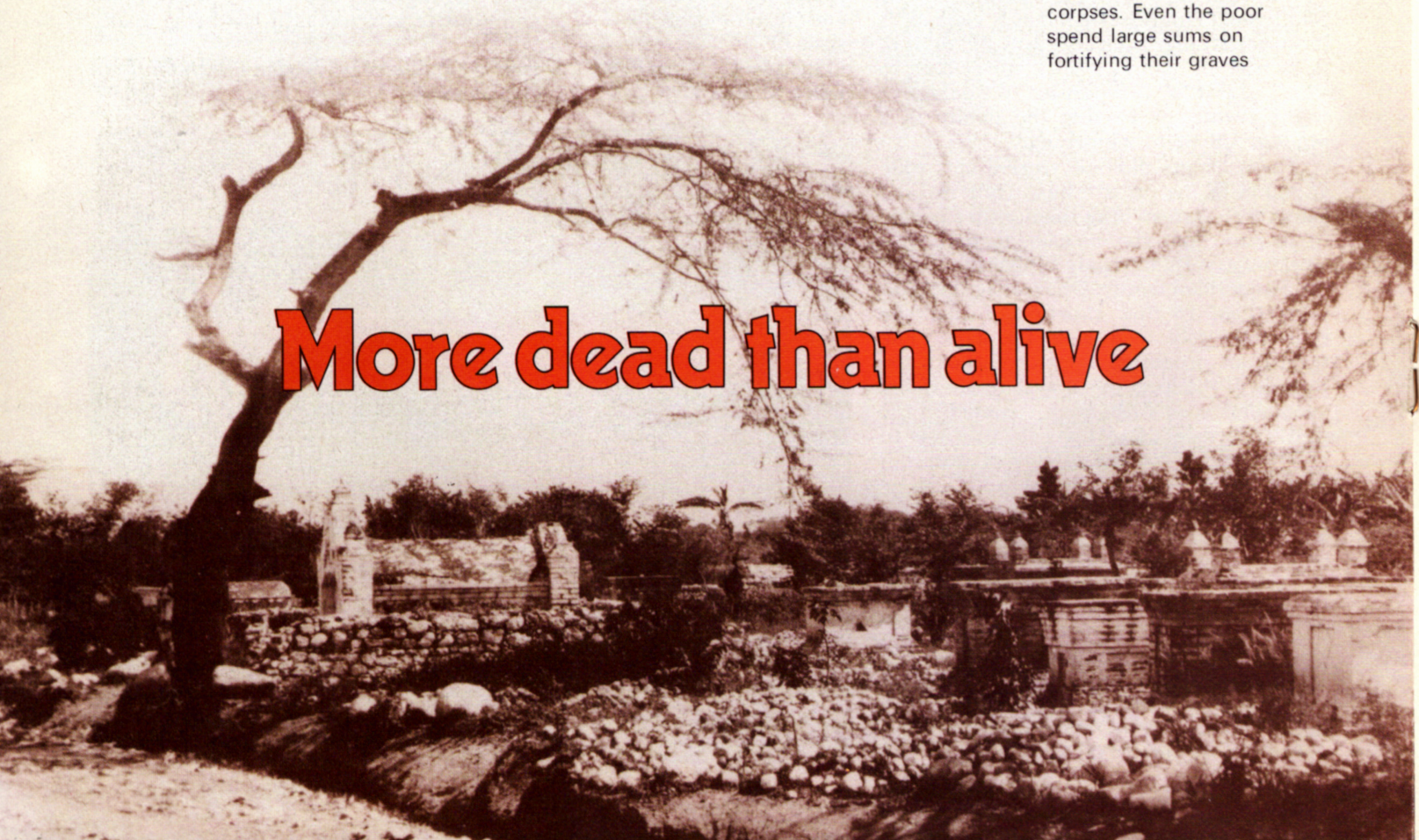
The word *zumbi* appears in many African languages. In the Congo it means a fetish; in Dahomey it refers specifically to the Python God. In modern voodoo it seems that a snake deity is called upon to animate the zombie at the whim of the sorcerer who has become the corpse's master. The rites involved combine aspects of African magic and religion, with elements derived from both Western occultism and popular Catholicism.

Voodoo played its part in the revolution in which Haitians threw off French rule. In August 1791 France was in the throes of the turmoil that had begun some two years previously. The King and Queen were prisoners, the nobility and clergy had seen their power torn from them, and liberty, equality and fraternity had been adopted as the watchwords of the new order.

Little seemed at first to have changed in St Domingue, the western third of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, the brightest jewel in the French colonial crown. There, 40,000 Frenchmen controlled half a million black slaves and 30,000 mulattos, growing crops of cotton, sugar, coffee and indigo. The first effect of the disturbances in France had been to improve the lot of the mulattos. Then the darker-skinned Haitians grew restless, helped by the agitation of a mysterious priest-sorcerer named Boukman who had

Above: the role of a zombie is acted out in a voodoo street festival. The whitened face and shroud-like wrappings suggest a newly buried corpse

Below: the structures over these Haitian graves are intended to make them into secure homes for the corpses. Even the poor spend large sums on fortifying their graves



found his way to St Domingue from the British colony of Jamaica. On 14 August 1791 Boukman summoned those who wished to follow him to a rendezvous deep in the forests. According to contemporary accounts, thousands of slaves slipped away along secret forest trails to the meeting, during a colossal tropical storm that must have lent extra terror and awe to the proceedings that followed.

Boukman conducted a blood ritual, sacrificing a pig and asking all who wished to be free to drink of the still-warm blood. The ceremony ended with a wild dance of 'divine inebriation', after which the participants melted away into the forests again. The whole ritual closely resembled the activities of Mau Mau during the Kenyan war of independence of the 1950s – and it had a similar result. During the next few days most of the great plantations were overrun and their owners killed. Although the stronger French colonists clung on for a further 12 years, the final result of the nocturnal gathering was the complete defeat of the French and the establishment, under the leadership of President Toussaint l'Ouverture, of the independent black republic of Haiti – home of voodoo. And, according to the beliefs of the Haitian peasantry and, often enough, of the educated élite, it was also the home of the zombie, that sinister, animated, but soulless corpse.

The zombie is the slave of an evil sorcerer, known as a *bokor*, who has removed a newly dead body from its grave and, by means of spells, endowed it with the shadow of life. It is an incomplete existence. Although the zombie eats, breathes, excretes, hears and even speaks, it has no memory of its previous life and no understanding of its own true condition. In other words a zombie is a fleshly robot, a biological machine.

Below: the first black ruler of Haiti, Toussaint L'Ouverture, who, though born a slave, became a rebel general and expelled occupying French, Spanish and British forces from his country. Years of turmoil and poverty followed, during which voodoo, a religion of African origin, flourished and satisfied the emotional needs of the Haitian people

Bottom: a dark hat and suit, draped over a gravestone, represent the funereal clothes of Baron Samedi, a voodoo god of death. Paradoxically, the Baron is fond of jesting and ribaldry

The Haitian peasant, ever alert for evil or dangerous aspects of voodoo, has several signs by which he can spot a zombie. It tends to lurch from side to side as it walks, to carry out other physical actions in a mechanical way, to have glazed and unfocused eyes, and to have a nasal quality in its voice. This characteristic is particularly associated with death in Haitian folklore, probably because it is the local custom to plump out the nostrils of a corpse with cotton wool. The *Guédé* – sinister, lecherous gods of death in the voodoo pantheon – are notable for speaking in this way. When a voodoo devotee is possessed by one of the *Guédé*, he or she always speaks with a strongly nasal intonation. A further link between zombies and the death gods is suggested by the fact that one of the most prominent of the latter, Captain Guédé, is often given the title Captain Zombie.

Almost all Haitians fear the possibility of their deceased relatives being transformed into walking cadavers. The various preventive measures taken to avoid this possibility are readily noticeable in present-day Haiti. For instance, even the poorest peasants will borrow money to build heavy stone coverings over the graves of their immediate relatives. In rural areas graves are dug as near a public road or footpath as possible, so that sorcerers will be unable, for fear of prying eyes, to go about their nefarious work. Sometimes the bereaved family will watch over a new grave for night after night until they are certain that the body is sufficiently decomposed to be useless for the purposes of a *bokor*. On occasion the dead are buried in the

Above left: the African roots of voodoo. The headless body of a sacrificial goat lies on the floor of a hut in Dahomey. The young woman, possessed by the goat's spirit, imitates it by going on all fours. Identical rituals are performed in Haiti

Left: a voodoo priestess, her eyes staring, in the grip of religious frenzy. She has just bitten the head from a chicken: its blood stains her dress

Below left: a machete and the national flag featured in a ceremony in which Haitians honoured the American writer William Seabrook in the 1920s

safety of a peasant farm's compound.

Those who particularly dread sorcery carry out even more extraordinary precautions to prevent their dead entering the zombie's misty half-world. They may inject poison into the body, or mutilate it with a knife, or fire a bullet into it, thus 'killing' it twice over.

A less drastic measure is to place eyeless needles and balls of yarn in the grave, along with thousands of tiny sesame seeds. It is thought that the spirit of the dead person will be so busy with the impossible tasks of threading the needle and counting the seeds that it will be unable to hear the voice of a *bokor* calling it from the tomb. Or a knife may be placed in the corpse's hand, with which it can defend itself.

Sorcerers sometimes control whole troops of zombies and on occasion have gone so far as to hire them out as labourers. One alleged case was recorded by William Seabrook.

There was a bumper sugar crop in 1918. Hasco, the Haitian-American Sugar Corporation, offered a bonus for new workers on its extensive plantations. Soon little groups of villagers, including whole families, made their way to the company's labour office. It was customary for such village groups to work collectively, the pay for the entire work force being given to a foreman who shared it out when the party returned home.

One morning an old village headman, Ti Joseph, and his wife Croyance led a band of nine ragged and shuffling men into the Hasco office. They were, explained Joseph, backward and ignorant hill farmers from the trackless mountain area near Haiti's border with the Dominican Republic. They spoke only an obscure rural dialect and could understand neither Creole nor French. In spite of this disadvantage, he continued, they were excellent workmen, strong and healthy, who would labour happily.

Hasco's labour manager took the gang on, agreeing with Joseph's suggestion that they should work far from other groups: the head man explained that they were so primitive that they would become shy and confused near other people. But his real reason for insisting on his workers' isolation was his fear that one or other of them would be recognised by a relative or former friend. For every one of Ti Joseph's work gang was a zombie.

Ti Joseph's strange labourers worked steadfastly through the hours of daylight, stopping only at dusk for their meal of unsalted millet porridge. Voodoo tradition holds that if a zombie tastes meat or salt it becomes conscious of its true condition and, weeping bitter tears, makes its way back to the grave that is its proper home.

One Sunday morning Ti Joseph left his wife Croyance to look after the zombies while he took the day off. Croyance led them into the nearby town: there was to be a church festival and she apparently thought, surprisingly, that the zombies would be pleased to witness a religious procession. But the zombies were as unmoved by the spectacle as by anything else that happened around them. Dumbly and vacantly they continued to stare into space.

Croyance, pitying them, decided that sweetmeats might please them. She bought some *tablettes*, which are made of brown sugar, coriander and peanuts. She put a piece into each zombie's mouth. But the peanuts had been salted before the *tablettes* had been made. As they chewed the delicacy, the zombies realised that they were dead, that they did not belong to Haiti's bright sunlit world, but to the darkness of the tomb.

With an appalling outcry they rose and shuffled out of the town into the forests and towards their home village in the mountains.

When at last they arrived there, they were recognised by the relatives and friends who had buried them months before. As they reached the graveyard each approached its own grave, scrabbled away the stones and earth that covered it, and then fell to the ground, a mass of corruption. Ti Joseph's power, which had preserved their bodies from decay, had vanished.

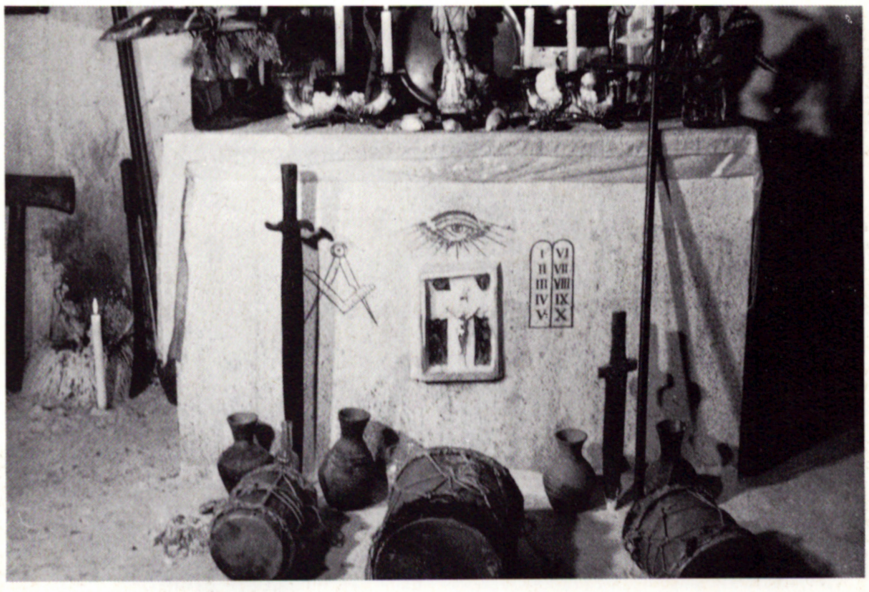
The villagers inflicted their revenge on Ti Joseph. They paid a local sorcerer to cast a spell on him. But before it could take its effect, some of the men had ambushed him and cut off his head.

Seabrook was told this tale by Constant Polynice, a Haitian farmer who claimed to disbelieve the superstitions of his countrymen – but the zombies, he explained, were plain fact. Shortly after telling this story, he showed Seabrook a group of three supposed zombies. They were digging with machetes, under the supervision of a young woman. Seabrook looked into the face of one of the men:

> and what I saw then, coupled with what I had heard previously, or despite it, came as a rather sickening shock. The eyes were the worst. It was not my imagination. They were in truth like the eyes of a dead man, not blind, but staring, unfocused, unseeing. The whole face . . . seemed not only expressionless, but incapable of expression.

Seabrook reassured himself that these men were 'nothing but poor ordinary demented human beings, idiots, forced to toil in the fields'. But his Haitian friend was not convinced.

Writing in the 1950s the French anthropologist Alfred Métraux heard a good deal of evidence both for and against the existence of zombies. But when he was shown one in the flesh he concluded that she was 'a wretched lunatic'. Indeed the following day the person he had seen was identified as a mentally deficient girl who had escaped from the locked room in which she was kept.



Above: in an Haitian temple an altar carrying such Christian images as the Virgin Mary, a crucifix and the Ten Commandments is also adorned with drums, swords and ritual drinking cups – implements used in voodoo ceremonies

Left: this woman, the photographer believed, had been a zombie for 29 years. She had been identified by at least two people as a relative, Felicia Felix-Mentor, who had died in 1907. She was being cared for in a hospital when the journalist Zora Hurston took the picture

A writer who was perhaps less credulous than Seabrook concerning Haitian voodoo was Zora Hurston, another American. She met and photographed a girl who was alleged to have been a zombie for no less than 29 years. In 1907 Felicia Felix-Mentor had died of a sudden illness, and had been buried by her husband and brother. In 1936 a girl dressed only in a thin, torn cotton smock was found wandering in the roadway near the brother's farm. She appeared to have lost the power of speech completely. Felicia's father and brother both identified her as the long-dead girl. Taken to a hospital, she cringed fearfully when anyone approached, as if expecting ill-treatment. It was there that Zora Hurston took her picture and tried to speak to her. Afterwards she wrote:

> The sight was dreadful. That blank face with the dead eyes. The eyelids were white all around the eyes as if they had been burned with acid. There was nothing you could say to her or get from her except by looking at her, and the sight of this wreckage was too much to endure for long.

Could Felicia Felix-Mentor's father and brother have made such confident identification so many years after her burial? Was the girl who had been found merely a wandering lunatic? The firmly entrenched belief of the Haitians that relatives and loved ones have been seen after their burial, living the half-life of the zombie, throws doubt on this comforting theory. Could there be something deeper to the legend of the zombie?

How could a sorcerer bring a corpse to life? Answers are suggested on page 1646

The ones that got away

Explanations for the reported sightings of monsters in the North American lakes are nearly as numerous as the reports themselves. But, as PETER COSTELLO notes, the theory that an unknown species of water animal is awaiting discovery is still a prime contender

WHILE MONSTER-HUNTING expeditions to Loch Ness have received enormous publicity, far less is heard of the research carried out on North American lakes. Predictably, 'official' zoologists and fisheries officials have tended to dismiss reports of monsters; but occasionally they have been more open-minded and have thrown resources into the search for unknown creatures.

Reports of strange animals in Lake Pohenegamook, in Quebec, started as long ago as 1874, and there was another spate of sightings in the 1920s. In 1957 Dr Vadim Vladikov, Director of the Quebec Department of Game and Fisheries, launched an investigation into the monster, which came to be called Ponik, or the Pohenegamook Sea Cow. According to descriptions given to Dr Vladikov, Ponik was:

> an animal between 12 and 18 feet [3.5 and 5.5 metres] long, brown or black in colour, with a round black back 2 or 3 feet [60 or 90 centimetres] wide, and a sawtooth fin down the centre. Any time anyone approaches close, the animal slithers away and sinks below the lake's surface.

Dr Vladikov, however, could find no tangible evidence of the creature. In the mid 1970s it was again investigated, this time by an expedition set up by an American organisation, the Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained. For 10 days three divers searched for the animal with the aid of sonar, and they did obtain a trace of an object about 25 feet (7.5 metres) long underneath their boat, and on film they recorded a rather murky dark shape.

Other Canadian lake monsters have been investigated by qualified scientists. For many years the lakes north of Winnipeg have produced numerous sightings of unidentified animals. Lake Manitoba has been a particularly prolific source of reports since 1908 (see page 1610); but the sightings of 1960 were astounding. On 22 July 20 people saw 'a large reptile'. Three weeks later on the same beach – now, naturally, named 'Manipogo Beach' – 17 people saw three monsters: two large ones and a smaller one.

Above: the monster of Lake Champlain, on the border between Canada and the United States. The length of body seen above the water has been reported as about 20 feet (6 metres)

Below: Lake Champlain in the grip of winter ice

These reports aroused the keen interest of Dr James A. Macleod, Chairman of the Zoological Department of the University of Manitoba. Dr Macleod was open-minded enough to take seriously the possibility that some prehistoric reptile did indeed survive in

the northern end of the lake. But his research was short-lived because it was hard to find the finance to back the study of such ideas.

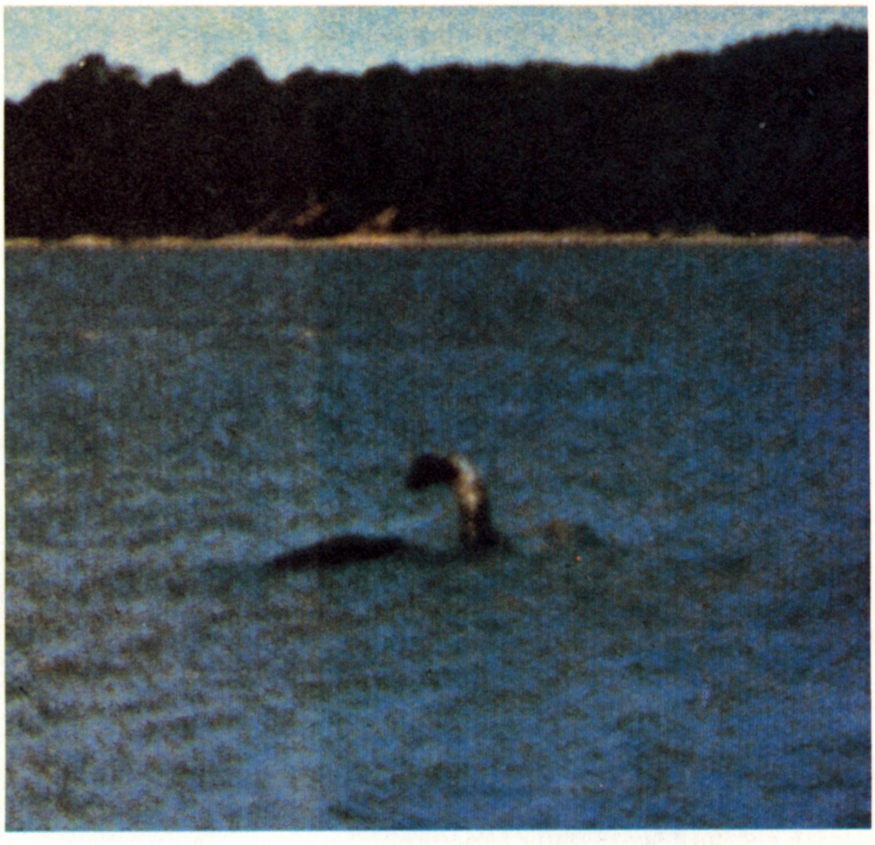
Lake Champlain, which straddles the Canadian-American border, has been the subject of much research in recent years, and possibly our best chance of finding out what these mysterious animals are lies here. The first reliable reports came from 1819, when pioneer settlers near Port Henry, New York state, saw the creature in Bulwagga Bay. After more than a half century of silence on the subject, there was a spate of sightings in the 1870s. The creature was reported by an excursion party in Horseshoe Bay, and during the summer of 1871 by the passengers of the steamer *Curlew*. The accounts spoke of a head raised on an erect neck, leaving a wake 30 to 40 feet (9 to 12 metres) long.

These reports came to the notice of the great P.T. Barnum, who in 1873 offered a reward of $50,000 for the hide of the 'sea serpent', which was to be sent to New York's State Hall in a copper boiler. On 30 October of that year the monster was given further celebrity by Thomas Nast, the crusading cartoonist of *Harper's Weekly* (best known for his part in bringing down the corrupt Tammany politician 'Boss' Tweed). Nast delighted the lecture audience with his baroque rendering of the creature.

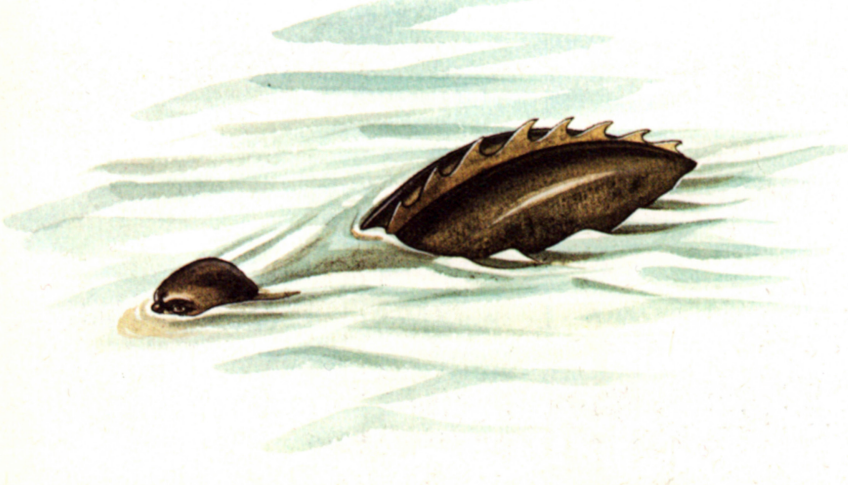
This was all good fun, but even Barnum's tempting prize did not produce substantial evidence. However, in July 1880 a Dr Brigham and Mr Ashley Shelters saw the animal in Missiquoi Bay, in the Canadian waters of the lake. As they afterwards told the story:

> portions of its body fully 20 feet [6 metres] in length appeared above the surface of the water. . . . [Its head was] as large as a flour barrel . . . of irregular shape . . . eyes being of greenish tinge.

Captain Mooney, sheriff of Clinton County, made a report of great interest. The animal he saw raised its head 4 or 5 feet (1.2 or 1.5 metres) out of the rough water; it was about 25 feet (7.5 metres) long and the exposed neck was 7 inches (18 centimetres) across. Mooney noted the muscles contracting in its neck, which was curved like that 'of a goose when about to take flight'.



Above: Lake Champlain's mystery creature, as photographed by Sandra Mansi in 1977. Sceptics suggest that what seem to be the head and neck are in reality the fin of a small whale, appearing above the water as the creature rolls on its side



Below: Ponik, the monster that supposedly inhabits Lake Pohenegamook in Quebec, is noteworthy for the sawtooth fin along its back. It is thought that sonar equipment detected it on one occasion

Even more astonishing was a report of an animal hauling itself some 6 feet (2 metres) onto the shore at Cumberland Head in September 1899. It was said to be dark on top and lighter underneath – the camouflage colours one would expect for an aquatic animal.

By 1982 there were over 130 reports of the Lake Champlain monster. Of these 33 mention a long neck, the one feature that distinguishes reports of lake monsters from Loch Ness to Patagonia. It is hard to believe that any conventional explanation, such as a large fish, an otter or a seal, can account for all the details of the evidence.

Naturally, odd stories abound among the lake shore families. According to Carl Washburn – who had himself seen the monster while out fishing with his father in 1900 – 'another serpent had been caught and tied up near North Beach in Burlington'. Unfortunately, it escaped.

We owe the fact that so many reports have been preserved to the personal interest of a local journalist, Walter Hard, editor of *Vermont Life*. The part played by intelligent local editors in recording incidents such as the lake monster sightings cannot be overemphasised. One Scottish editor says her paper never publishes reports of water monsters, as a matter of policy. Fortunately, some others are more enlightened.

Extensive coverage of lake monster stories has the regrettable consequence that every possible oddity from the lake is twisted into a 'sea serpent' story. In 1945 a syndicated news

story was distributed under the headline 'Baby sea serpent taken in Vermont water – may be offspring of lake monster'. It reported that Erwin Bell of Burlington, an employee of the Champlain Transportation Company, captured a 14-inch (35-centimetre) 'reptile' in shallow water at Shelburne Bay. It resembled a small alligator, except that it had smaller jaws. Bell himself supposed that this 'baby sea serpent' was some kind of salamander – and he was probably correct.

The hero of Lake Champlain monster research is Joseph M. Zarzynski. In 1975 Zarzynski, then a 25-year-old social studies teacher, became 'almost obsessed' with the problem. From then on he and his friends made annual expeditions to the lake, following up old reports and discovering new ones. Exploration around Lake Champlain is difficult and costly. But his persistence has begun to pay off. Lacking the resources that have been expended on Loch Ness over the years, he has built up an immense dossier of reports, and has investigated the lake with great fortitude.

One thing disturbs him. He has noted that there seem to be fewer sightings of long-necked creatures in the years since 1920. The descriptions available from the early decades of this century and from the last century are also better than the later ones. The ever-increasing recreational use of the lake may be putting pressure on the monsters and gradually wiping them out, he surmises. In 1979 he appealed for protection of the creatures. In October 1980 the town trustees of Port Henry declared their waters off limits to anyone intent on harming the Champ, as the lake creature had been dubbed, and efforts were under way to get the legal protection of the New York state authorities.

Phineas T. Barnum, the great American showman, made his own contribution – of questionable value – to the study of unknown lake creatures by offering the huge sum of $50,000 for the Lake Champlain monster. He would have been content with the hide of the monster – which, fortunately, no hunter succeeded in providing

The Zarzynski expeditions brought the Champ to the attention of newspapers and magazines all over the world, and made it almost as famous as Nessie. Then, at the end of June 1981, a colour photograph said to show the monster was published and aroused heated controversy. The photographer, Sandra Mansi, said she had taken the picture in July 1977 with a pocket camera. It showed the creature at the surface, its long neck curved back over a low humped body.

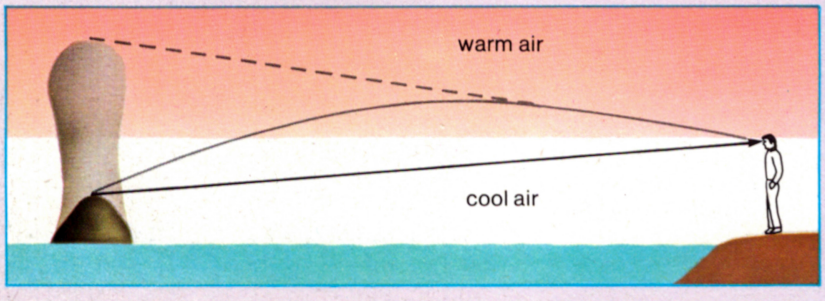
The Optical Sciences Center at the University of Arizona was asked to examine the print – the original negative had vanished. Professor B.R. Frieden, assisted by J.R. Greenwell, pronounced the print genuine. But Professor Paul Kurtz of the State University of New York, well-known as a debunker of all things mysterious and unexplained, said he thought the monster was as real as UFOs, the bigfoot – or the tooth fairy. However, another academic, Roy Mackal of Chicago University, speculated that the picture might show a zeuglodon – a primitive form of whale.

Sandra Mansi's inability to remember exactly where the photograph was taken has given ammunition to her critics. But the search for a monster in Lake Champlain goes on. Clifford Rollins of Rutland, Vermont, who considers all the fuss about monsters to be 'horse manure', has offered a reward of $500 on Champ – dead or alive. This is little enough reward for solving a centuries-old mystery – especially compared with Barnum's offer – and so far there have been no claimants.

Monsters have often been dismissed as myths, hoaxes or misperceptions. The small sample of cases briefly described in these

A touch of the sun

An atmospheric effect that could distort ordinary objects to give rise to monster reports has been described by W.H. Lehn, a Canadian scientist. It can occur when a layer of relatively warm air lies over cold air just above the water. Light rays travelling upwards from an object in the water, such as a boulder, are then deflected downward in the transition region between the two temperature zones (below). A person at an appropriate distance will see a composite of multiple images of the object – one formed by light rays that have travelled in a straight line to his eye, and others formed by rays that have followed a curved path. This composite image of the object can be distorted in a vast number of different ways. One of the most common effects is to 'stretch' the image upwards, without making it correspondingly wider. The long thin shape resulting is very like many descriptions of sea serpents' necks. The object may be sufficiently distinctive to be recognisable – for example, it may be a ship. Or the atmospheric conditions may change, leaving the object in plain view. But in other cases the shifting layers of cold and warm air can create the illusion of a creature submerging and reappearing. The object may also have its own real motion: for example, a 'sea serpent' may be a killer whale, projecting its head from the water briefly – a hunting procedure that is called 'spy-hopping'. The phenomenon is, in fact, a mirage.



Left: two plesiosaurs of the Jurassic era. It is often suggested that some of them survived their supposed extinction and are the modern lake monsters

articles should make it clear that such wholesale dismissals are unjustified. Hoaxes and journalistic fabrication cover only a few incidents, which have been easily exposed. But we are still far from any solution to the mystery of what these creatures are.

Some reports of monsters may well have been optical illusions. Professor Waldemar H. Lehn of the University of Winnipeg has suggested that a distortion of the paths of light waves – a mirage – over the cold waters of a lake can cause ordinary objects and animals, such as a lake shore boulder, to appear greatly elongated, giving the long-necked appearance that is so typical of all monster photographs. But Dr Lehn insists that it is not the aim of his proposal 'to discredit the existence of yet unidentified animals or species, for there is impressive evidence to the contrary from sonar data and underwater photography'.

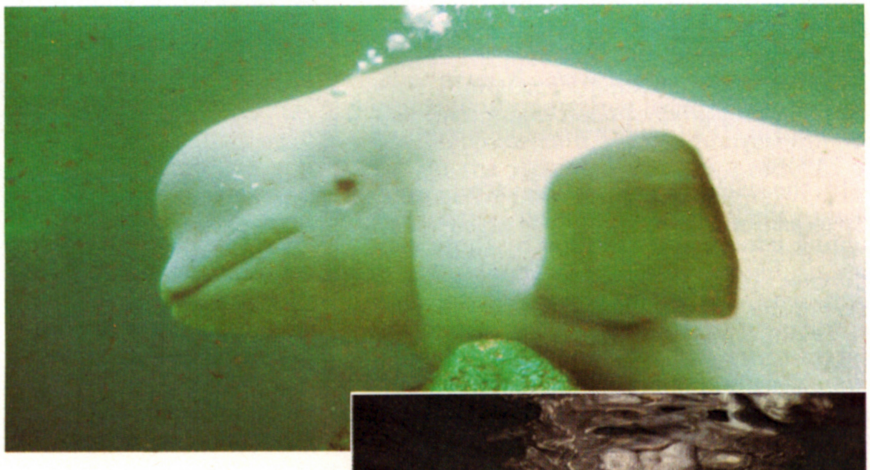
But while this may account for part of the evidence, it would be ridiculous as an explanation for the accounts of creatures 20 to 40 feet (6 to 12 metres) long, capable of hauling themselves onto the shore or making off at great speed. In many cases it is quite clear that the witnesses have seen something large, animate and terrifying.

Could it be that what they have seen is normal enough, but out of place? It has been suggested by the writer Loren Coleman that the monsters in the Californian Lake Folsom are errant crocodiles; however, a crocodile is unlikely to survive in the cold water of a mountain lake.

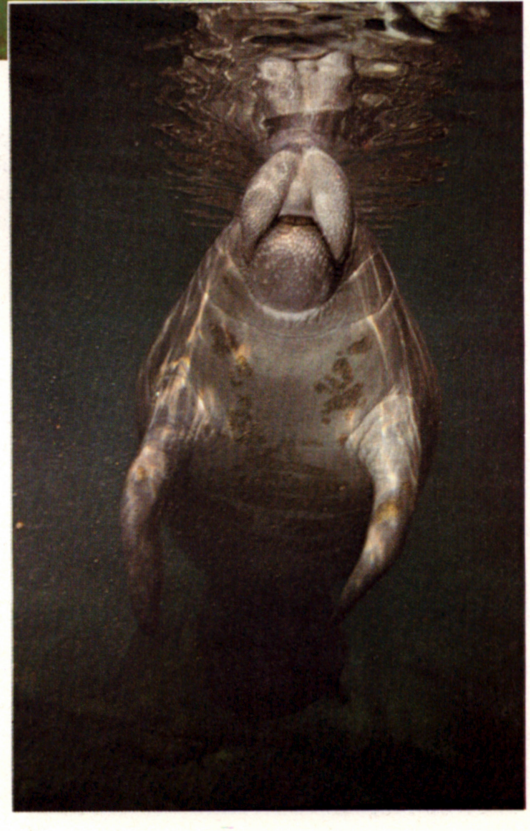
The same argument was brought against the suggestion that sea serpents and, by extension, lake monsters are surviving prehistoric reptiles, animals along the lines of long-necked plesiosaurs. But it has been suggested that some of the prehistoric reptiles may well have been 'warm-blooded' and therefore better able to cope with changes of water temperature.

Others have looked for less radical explanations. At Lake Flathead in Montana it has always been thought that the local monster might be a giant sturgeon. There are instances of Pacific sturgeon up to 18 feet (5.5 metres) in length; but in Russia they have been known to grow to about 26 feet (8 metres). Giant sticklebacks, manatees, white whales – these are other theories that have been proposed. And then there are the really radical theories: the suggestions that, because they have proved so elusive, like 'manimals' and giant flying creatures, they are psychic manifestations – perhaps a product of a particular witness's mind at a particular place and time.

But if the monsters exist and are of ordinary flesh and blood, then it is likely that the mystery will be solved one day, by the stranding of a carcase – or the capture of a large aquatic creature with distinctive eyes, a furry hide and a strange cry.



Below: the white whale, or beluga, which inhabits Arctic seas and rivers, and is often cited as the cause of monster sightings



Right: a manatee, or sea cow – a plant-eating mammal confined to shallow tropical waters. If lake-dwelling cousins exist they may account for a few of the reports of monsters

Further reading

Peter Costello, *In search of lake monsters*, Garnstone Press 1974

Arlene B. Gaal, *Beneath the depths*, Valley Review Publishing Co. (Kelowna) 1976

May Moon, *Ogopogo*, J.J. Douglas (Vancouver) 1977

Portrait of a lady

Coral Polge has the remarkable talent of being able to draw exact likenesses of people she has never seen or known – people whose faces come to her from beyond the grave through her psychic powers. ROY STEMMAN describes an extraordinary medium

MANY THOUSANDS of people believe they have received tangible proof of life after death. It has been given to them in the form of portraits of their loved ones, drawn by a London medium, Coral Polge.

These pencil and pastel sketches, which now adorn walls in homes around the world, often show a striking likeness to dead relatives and friends. Not only are their features recognisable but sometimes they are dressed in a characteristic style.

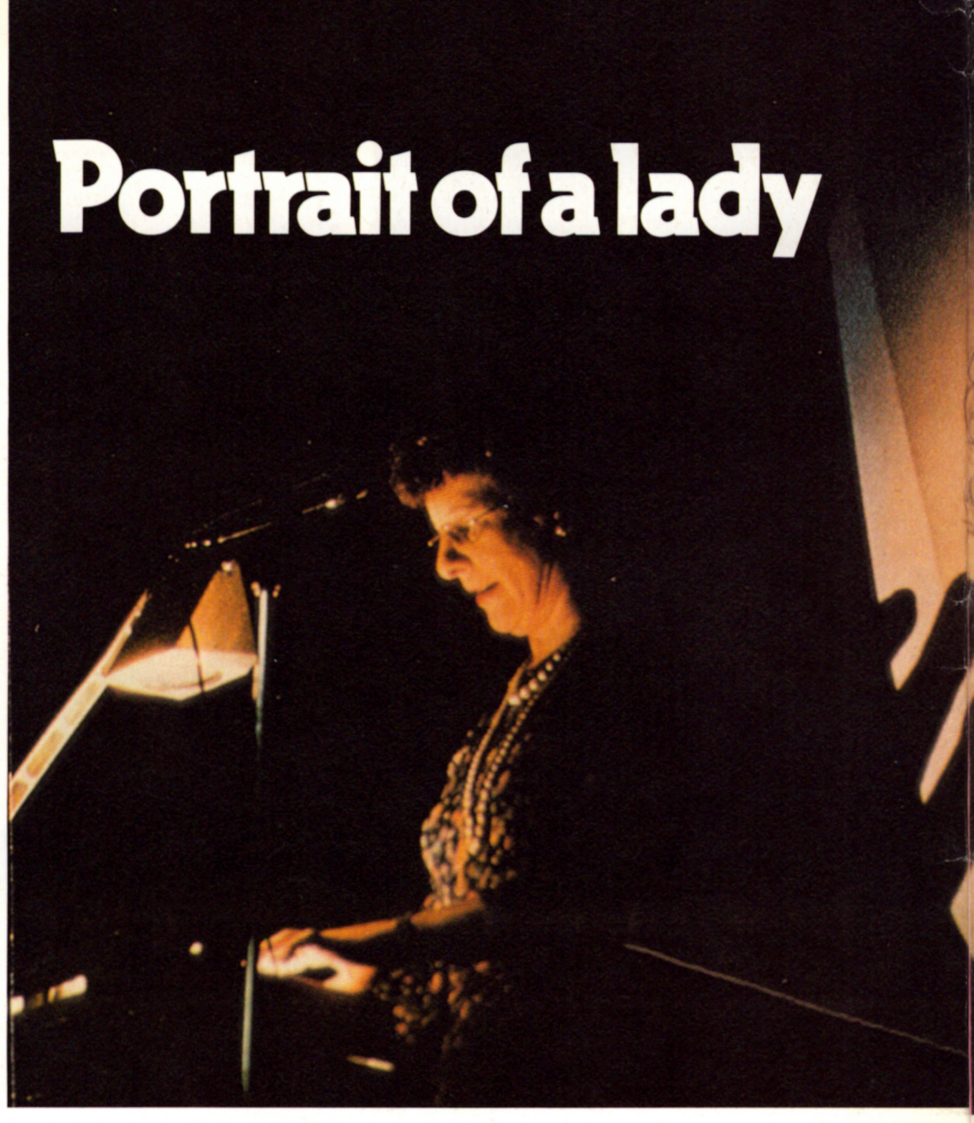
Psychic artist Coral Polge, wife of spiritual healer Tom Johanson, does not see the dead, nor is her hand controlled by spirits in the way that automatic writing mediums claim to receive their scripts. 'I just "feel" the people coming through,' Coral told the Spiritualist newspaper *Psychic News* in 1972. 'I know exactly what to draw without thinking about it. It's involuntary, like breathing or walking.'

In the early stages of her career Coral gleaned the information for her portraits by holding letters written to her by those anxious to discover the fate of people near to them who had died; nowadays she concentrates on personal sittings, enabling enquirers to see the sketches as she produces them. She also demonstrates her remarkable talent in public, using an overhead projector so that large audiences can witness the drawings being made.

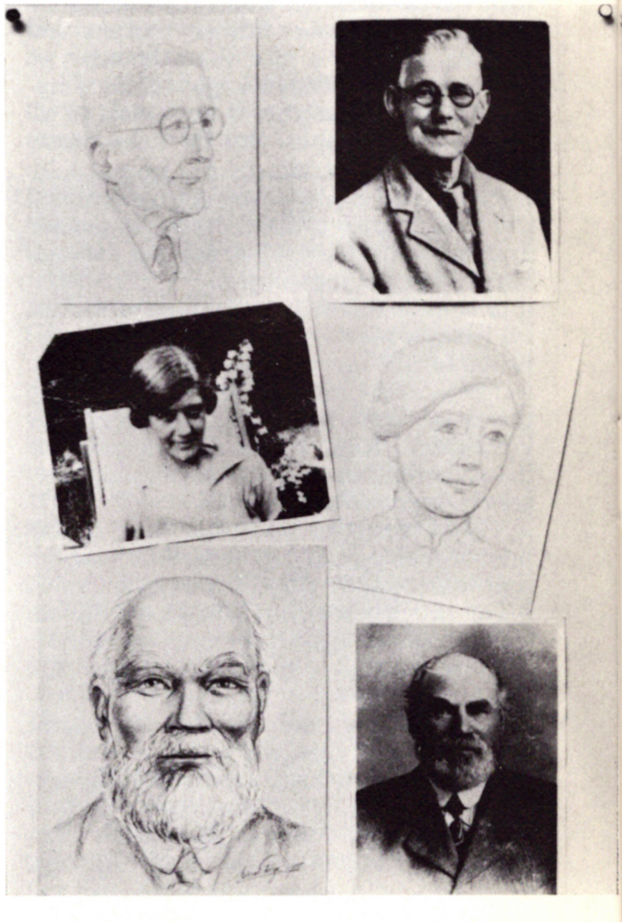
It was during one of these public performances that Coral drew the features of an elderly man with a droopy moustache. Among those in the audience was Phyllis Timms of Salisbury, Wiltshire, who recognised the man as her grandfather, Herbert Light, who had died of cancer.

But Mrs Timms did not acknowledge the portrait immediately: she wanted 'absolute proof'. In addition to drawing likenesses of the dead, Coral Polge also picks up psychic impressions that help to confirm their identity. In this case, she announced that she felt the elderly man was related to someone in the audience in a green dress. No one responded, and Mrs Timms was not wearing green. The psychic artist was insistent, however, that green was important as a link with the man she had drawn. It then occurred to Mrs Timms that her maiden name was Green – and she raised her hand to accept the portrait.

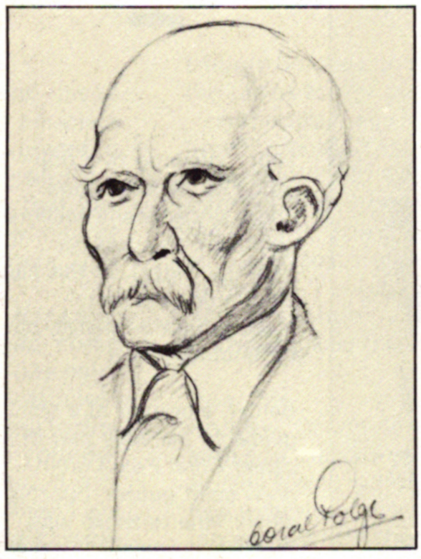
Coral's introduction to Spiritualism came through her parents, both of whom received spiritual healing in the 1940s. Then, during a visit to Harrow Spiritualist Church, she was

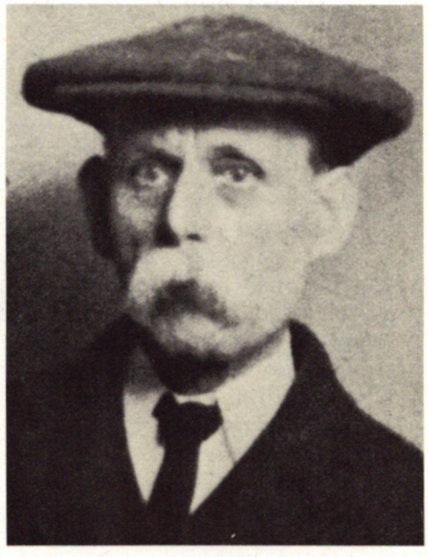


Above: Coral Polge often gives public demonstrations of her skills as a psychic artist by projecting her drawing on an overhead screen while working on it. This example was made in Australia in 1980

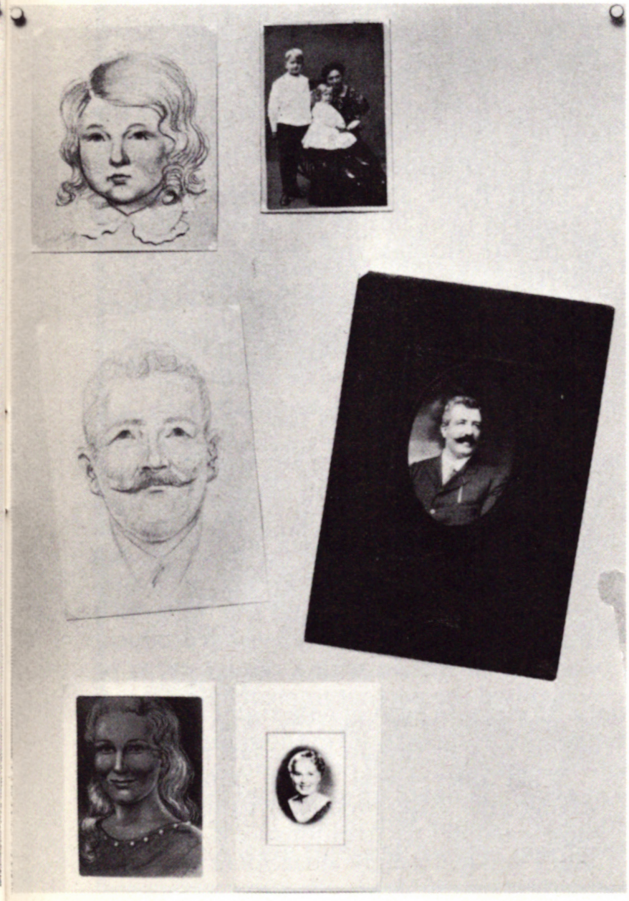


Right: drawings made by Coral Polge compared with pictures of the subjects. She produces her sketches in a matter of minutes – which makes her ability to capture her unseen 'communicators' all the more remarkable. Sometimes the results are unexpected, as one sitter discovered. She was hoping for a portrait of former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, whose biography she was writing. When Coral drew a 'pretty little girl' the sitter was disappointed – until she remembered a family portrait that showed that Coral's depiction of Hammarskjöld was in fact very accurate (far right, top)





Above: Coral Polge's drawing, made at a public demonstration, of a man called Herbert Light (above right). Light's granddaughter, who was in the audience, recognised his features immediately. But it was only after Coral had given further information – which could not have been acquired by normal means – that she acknowledged the portrait



told by a medium that she would be a psychic artist. Coral was trained as an artist at Harrow Art School, but she confesses that she was then hopeless at portraits – her particular interest was textile design; nevertheless, the medium's prediction was not met with scepticism: 'I never had any doubts this was what I had been looking for.'

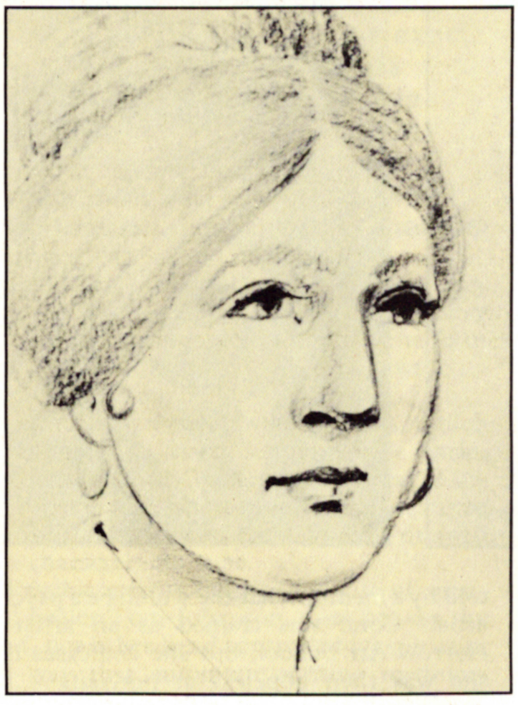
Coral took her first psychic circle in 1950, and in the next two decades produced an estimated 35,000 portraits.

To begin with, many of the people she drew were spirit guides – Red Indians, nuns, wise Chinese, smiling monks – and although they pleased the sitters they did not provide definite proof of survival, for no one could positively identify the subjects as having once lived on earth. So Coral made a special effort to produce more portraits of relatives. The results can sometimes be very impressive; it is not unusual for a sitter to burst into tears as he or she sees recognisable features appear on the psychic artist's pad. 'If I never get any more evidence for as long as I live, this is enough to convince me Spiritualism is true,' one woman told Coral.

High expectations

Coral cannot produce portraits to order. 'It creates barriers when people come expecting or wanting me to draw someone in particular. I draw whoever is able to get through.' Yet people do visit her with high expectations, sometimes raised by messages from dead relatives that they have received through other mediums.

One such visitor, who went to see Coral Polge anonymously, was expecting a portrait of a 'special person'. What Coral did not know was that the woman was writing a biography of Swedish-born Dag Hammarskjöld, the former United Nations Secretary-General who died in an aeroplane crash in Africa in 1961. The woman had a keen interest in Spiritualism and had apparently received several communications from the statesman through other mediums;



Left: a drawing by Coral Polge of the celebrated opera singer Maria Malibran compared to a portrait from life (right). In this case the picture was not produced for a relative, but for another singer

Below: a portrait of a spirit guide. In the early part of her career Coral Polge often drew spirit guides, but this meant little to those who wanted to communicate with someone known to them. She then made a special effort to sense her sitters' relatives trying to 'come through'

in one of these he promised her a portrait if she visited a psychic artist.

It was therefore with some disappointment that she watched as Coral drew a pretty little girl. At first she thought the sitting was a failure, but slowly, as the portrait took shape, it began to look strangely familiar. Soon she was smiling with pleasure: Hammarskjöld *had* produced his portrait after all.

While researching her book, the woman had looked at many old family photographs. One, she recalled, showed Dag Hammarskjöld at the age of two, sitting on his mother's knee, with long hair and wearing a dress. He looks just like a pretty little girl.

From singer to singer

A portrait produced by Coral Polge also provided corroboration of spirit messages received by singer Grace Brooks. When Grace visited the psychic artist she received a portrait of a young woman with an unusual hair style. 'This is a Spanish singer named Maria,' Coral told her.

Grace had received messages from Maria through the automatic writing of a young Australian singer, Deidre Dehn, whom she met on the set of the film *Oliver!* At first, Maria had simply given Deidre her Christian name and the surname Garcia; later she supplied the name Malibran. Deidre discovered that Maria Malibran (*née* Garcia) had been a celebrated opera singer of Franco-Spanish descent. Born in Paris in 1808, she made her London début at the age of 17; she died in Manchester, aged 28, after a fall from a horse.

When Deidre Dehn returned to Australia, Grace Brooks believed her contact with Maria Malibran to be broken. But the link persisted, it seems. The drawing produced by Coral Polge is strikingly similar to a portrait Grace found later at the British Museum.

The British medium has demonstrated her psychic art in various other European countries and in Canada and Australia. She has also made numerous television appearances. During a six-week tour of Australia in 1980 she was featured on the nationally broadcast *Don Lane Show*. On this occasion Coral was asked to draw just one portrait; she produced a picture of a young man, saying that he had three brothers and a father who was in poor health. A member of the studio audience recognised him immediately as the son of a friend; he had been killed in a car crash a year earlier.

Coral Polge also spent three weeks in Canada in 1980, during which time she gave 80 private sittings and several newspaper interviews and appeared in public twice, sharing the platform with another medium, David Young – she drawing the spirit communicators while he conveyed messages from them.

Not everyone accepts that Coral's drawings provide evidence of survival beyond the grave. Some regard them as extraordinary examples of extra-sensory perception, while sceptics dismiss them as coincidence. Not all the faces she draws are of the dead: she has occasionally produced portraits of babies before they were born. And she once did a drawing for a Norwegian television producer who was in Britain with a camera crew; he recognised the portrait immediately – it was of one member of the crew who had been unable to visit Britain at the last moment.

What does Coral Polge think of her strange gift? 'After producing so many drawings, you don't try to rationalise it,' she says. 'But I still feel a slight amazement that it has anything to do with me.'

Post script

Your letters to THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,
With reference to your article 'At death's door' (issue 62): I am currently researching into elderly people's attitudes towards death and have interviewed a number of individuals, including widows and widowers. One of the most important points that has emerged is that all of them, including those who have stated that they are 'not particularly religious', believe in an afterlife of some sort.

In reply to my questions concerning such things as spirits, all the widows reported having had some form of 'spiritual experience'. For example, one said: 'I woke up one night to see my late husband who told me not to be frightened but my sister was going to die. I did not believe this as she was 11 years younger than me. But three weeks later she was dead. It was such a shock.' Another respondent said: 'When I am uncertain what to do, I call out my husband's name and I can feel his hands resting upon my shoulder, as when he was alive. Then I know what to do.' A third said: 'Both my daughter and I have smelled my late husband's cigar in the evening, as if it was coming from the kitchen. Also, he was a night worker. Our bedroom was above the kitchen and he would knock on the floor at 5 p.m. every day to tell me he was getting up. I have heard him tapping quite often.'

All but one of the widowers I have interviewed claimed to have had at least one 'spiritual experience', and the exception told me that his married daughter has seen her mother at her house. One widower said: 'Frequently at night I have woken up because I can hear my wife calling to me from downstairs.' (His wife was an invalid and slept in the living room. She had a bell by her and if she needed anything she would wake him by ringing the bell and calling his name.) Another widower said, 'I have seen my wife twice since her death five months ago. I have spoken to her but she has not answered me.'

From the above, it could be maintained that spirits do exist and that they inhabit places familiar to them, reinforcing the idea of the existence of an afterlife. However, the genuine affection of the surviving spouse for his or her deceased partner, which I perceived from the interviews, plus the shock of loss at the time of death, together with a deepset desire to be reunited, could be the real reason why the respective widower or widow interprets peculiar odours and strange noises as evidence that spirits do exist and feels a 'presence' or 'sees' his or her late spouse.

I have not endeavoured to demonstrate that the individuals I have interviewed were right or wrong in their belief in spirits and an afterlife. I am merely interested in the attitudes they hold and have given a few examples of how they firmly believe in spirits.
Yours faithfully,
Clifford H. Francis Huddersfield, Yorkshire

Dear Sir,
I was interested to read in issue 67 about the various premonitions of the Yorkshire Ripper murders sent in by readers. When the Ripper was 'on the loose', I felt a most terrible urge to tell someone to look out for a man with a beard; that a lorry, the number 6 and the letter P were relevant; that the murderer had been in trouble before and that he wasn't the person who sent the tapes to the police for his voice was different.

Although I was troubled by this feeling for a long time, I couldn't telephone the police because I felt they would not be able to do much with so little information; I also felt that they would laugh and call me a crank. The only person I told was my eldest son, who tried to persuade me to tell someone else – but I never did.
Yours faithfully,
Patricia Shaw (Mrs) Rochdale, Lancs.

Dear Sir,
Andrew Green is on very shaky ground when he seeks to disparage Harry Price and the hauntings at Borley Rectory [Postscript, issue 69]. Everyone who has examined the evidence dispassionately, including members of the SPR Council, has asserted that the allegations appear to be based on doubtful evidence. Trevor Hall's work is not above suspicion and is certainly not unbiased.

To follow up one point raised by Andrew Green, it would be interesting to know how many times he, Guy Lyon Playfair and Trevor Hall have been to Borley. I have visited the rectory well over 100 times since 1947 and have met or been in contact with practically everyone who has had anything to do with Borley. The picture that emerges is that Borley Rectory was a very haunted house – long before Harry Price had heard of the place, let alone visited it; since Price's death the site, the cottage, the church and the churchyard have all been the scene of paranormal activity, much of it witnessed by impartial observers. The evidence and indeed the involvement of Harry Price is not necessary to establish that here was, and still may be, a genuine haunt.

Andrew Green was not present at Borley when the television programme he refers to was made, and whatever he thinks he knows about the matter is second- or third-hand. The previously recorded sounds had been described to the producer of the programme, Hugh Burnett, as 'paranormal', and I took Burnett round the church and showed him that every sound recorded *could* have had a natural explanation. Andrew Green was not involved in any way with this aspect of the programme and his only contact with my old friend Dr Paul Tabori was one telephone call and no correspondence. Andrew Green's contribution to *The ghost hunters* (1977) was to relate a very colourful ghost story at his cottage in Sussex; subsequently he told me he had made a number of mistakes – but it had nothing to do with Borley. The full story of that remarkable case is presented in *The ghosts of Borley* by Paul Tabori and myself, which was published in 1973 by David and Charles.
Yours faithfully,
Peter Underwood London

The debate about Borley seems strangely prone to slip from a discussion of facts into a quagmire of vilification. In the hope of sorting the facts from opinions and personalities, we are attempting a definitive history of the Borley controversy (see issue 93). Until then, this correspondence is closed.

Send *your* letters to THE UNEXPLAINED, Orbis House, 20–22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT

THE WORLD'S MYSTERIOUS PLACES – 32
The Arab city of Gedi, Kenya